

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A received PDU is sequentially identified by an n-bit frame number (FN) and an m-bit hyper frame number (HFN), which are 5 synchronously maintained on first and second stations. The second station determines an activation time at which a ciphering key change is to occur, and composes a security mode command that includes an identifying FN corresponding to the activation time, and x least-significant bits (LSBs) from the 10 HFN of the identifying FN. The second station transmits the security mode command to the first station. The x LSBs contained in the security mode command enable the first station to resolve cyclical ambiguities of the identifying FN to properly construct an application time. The first station uses 15 a first ciphering key to decrypt PDUs with FNs sequentially prior to the application time, and uses a second ciphering key to decrypt PDUs with FNs sequentially on or after the application time.